

**Salem School Committee
Committee of the Whole Meeting Minutes
November 21, 2022**

A Committee of the Whole (COW) meeting of the Salem School Committee was held on Monday, November 21, 2022 at 6:00 pm. This meeting was held in person at 29 Highland Ave., Rm. 227, Salem, MA.

Members Present: Mayor Kimberley Driscoll (arrived at 6:37pm), Ms. Mary Manning, Dr. Kristin Pangallo, Mr. Fleming, Ms. Beth Anne Cornell and Ms. Amanda Campbell (arrived at 6:38pm)

Members Virtual: Mr. Manny Cruz (arrives at 6:30pm)

Others in Attendance: Dr. Stephen Zrike, Ms. Elizabeth Pauley

Call of Meeting to Order

Mr. Manny Cruz calls the meeting to order at 6:06pm. Mr. Cruz takes a roll call.

Mayor Driscoll	Yes
Ms. Cornell	Yes
Mr. Cruz	Yes
Mr. Fleming	Yes
Ms. Manning	Yes
Dr. Pangallo	Yes
Ms. Campbell	Yes (arrived at 6:30pm)
Motion carries	7-0

Preliminary discussion of the budget process

Mr. Cruz notes that Ms. Cornell and the Finance subcommittee have been meeting to discuss having conversations earlier in the process around the budget. Mr. Cruz asks Ms. Cornell to take the lead on this topic in represents to presenting along with Ms. Manning.

Ms. Manning notes what we are looking for is bringing this decision to the larger school committee meeting preceding this meeting.

Ms. Cornell notes what she has been told on how the process works is that the Mayor has a conversation with the Superintendent about the number we are looking for that year. In the past, Ms. Cornell notes the Finance subcommittee was given 20 presentations to review and after reviewing all presentations, the number received back from the Mayor was less than half.

Ms. Cornell notes we are asking rather than having the Superintendent, the Mayor, and their designees, we are simply asking if the Superintendent will be receiving budget information at that time.

Ms. Manning notes the Finance subcommittee would like to be in the discussion so that they can all hear things initially from the city side so we can better back up the Superintendent through the process.

Dr. Zrike notes to discuss the context of the rationale and what is happening within the city. The public has also wanted to know the reason behind the number pertaining to the budget. Having the Finance subcommittee looped in as well so they are all aware what the city faced within the fiscal year.

Mr. Fleming notes this is a great idea that has never been done before and we would have to have the concurrence of the Mayor. Mr. Fleming also notes in the past there has never been a budget number given until one to two weeks before the budget was passed.

Ms. Cornell notes in the future she would like the Finance subcommittee to have all the information needed to make a decision.

Mr. Cruz notes the State funding issues as well and realizes that there are going to be limitations on the city's ability to increase funds for public schools from a local allocation perspective. To that end, as colleagues of the chair, we need to have this forward thinking conversation as soon as possible.

Ms. Cornell notes as Ms. Manning and she previously discussed, they cannot compel the Mayor or the city to do anything but they can respectfully request. As a matter of setting a new precedent for the new administration to come in and say this is how we would like to open up communication so we are all more informed and we are making an informed decision as opposed to a decision where we don't feel that informed. For some of the initial meetings moving forward, give the Finance subcommittee the context and tell us what the landscape is so that we understand what is happening.

Ms. Manning notes she does not want to raise expectations that this proposal will fix receiving a number. Ms. Manning notes the frustrations amongst the subcommittee was not knowing what was going on.

Dr. Pangallo notes concurring with her colleagues, this proposed process will be a better process to use. Dr. Pangallo notes more information is often better when making difficult decisions and having everyone on board. It is important to keep in mind these conversations with the city and a bizarre system of the city council votes and then the school committee votes. It does have to have a more standardized process. The fiscal responsibility falls differently when you are on the School Committee.

Mr. Cruz notes there certainly is a difference between the governance structure between Mayoral appointment versus elected. Mr. Cruz notes scheduling a winter retreat should be priority and scheduling a date in their future on the calendar before the end of 2022 year.

Ms. Manning notes if the proposal gets voted on tonight, then where is it sent to notify afterwards on the city side?

Dr. Pangallo notes the heads of all of the departments are to remain on at least for now but if they resign we can always contact Anna from the city side.

Ms. Cornell notes there are lots of policies that have a language and make every effort and she would like that language to be in the budget policy.

Mr. Cruz notes this proposal and process will need to go to the current chair and then their financial designees. There may be an Interim Mayor so we would then have to reintroduce the concept to that particular person because they will have all these duties and responsibilities of the Mayor until the conclusion of the special election.

Dr. Pangallo asks how many meetings occur between the Salem Public Schools staff on the Finance side and the City side and at what levels? How many meetings would our Finance subcommittee be a part of? How will we inform the rest of the School Committee of any changes?

Ms. Cornell notes there is an initial meeting speaking about what the budget looks like and here is what our concerns are for the coming fiscal year. Ms. Cornell notes we should have the Superintendent let us know when this particular meeting will take place so we can be a part of that discussion.

Ms. Manning notes we want to be there from the beginning so when everything is explained, we are there and present to hear.

Dr. Zrike notes these particular meetings take place in January. It may be a different month this year depending on the time of the governor's budget. Dr. Zrike also notes that Elizabeth Pauley will be meeting with Anna from the city's finance department and if there were to be any type of shift, then that is when the Finance subcommittee would be notified.

Mr. Cruz notes a winter retreat at the onset of the process would be best. Best time to schedule a strategic retreat would be around February or March. In the past, having a longer period of time in the beginning of the year to talk about priorities. This is also an important time to discuss resources and where we might need to make some shifts in our thinking in order to ensure that we're well positioned in the district to make progress towards our goals.

Ms. Manning notes at 6:38 p.m. that Mayor Driscoll and Ms. Campbell arrived in person to the meeting.

Mayor Driscoll notes that last year was an anomaly. Student opportunity, first budget out of Covid, Chapter 70 student opportunity dollars not coming through the way that anyone would have appreciated or anticipated.

Dr. Pangallo notes since there will be new people coming aboard, we would like to make this process much stronger.

Mayor Driscoll notes we are given department heads and while preparing your budget, it looks like a level service budget.

Ms. Manning notes the distinction is this committee is elected and there is a reason to make sure we are getting the context.

Ms. Campbell notes the difference is where it comes through a middle person via the school department without the Finance subcommittee to work without the context of having somebody there. Make sure the Finance subcommittee has the correct information so that we can support the budget process throughout.

Mayor Driscoll notes we should all be mindful of the realities of those projections and the process internally did not work out as positively this past year.

Ms. Manning notes we are going to report this discussion out to the full School Committee so they are aware of the discussion at the COW.

Mayor Driscoll asks if there is a specific recommendation or is there to be communication earlier about the budget between the Mayor and business manager?

Ms. Manning also notes that in this proposal when we speak about meetings, there can be a sentence added where it does state an early stage meeting.

Ms. Manning notes we are reporting to the School Committee meeting as the Committee of the Whole to propose that the Finance subcommittee be in attendance at early stage meetings between the Mayor and/or the designee between the Superintendent regarding budget consideration.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 6:59PM.

Respectfully submitted by,

Krista Perry

Executive Assistant to the School Committee & Superintendent